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SUBJECT: Lebanon: Media Reaction - April 27, 2009

Atmospherics:

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The media's reaction to Secretary Clinton's brief April 26 visit to Lebanon ranged between positive and cautious. Pro-March 14 media outlets viewed the visit as a confirmation of the United States' deep commitment to Lebanon. Opposition media outlets were not as enthusiastic. They felt that the visit did not offer anything new of quality but noted appreciatively that the Secretary did not provoke a big part of the Lebanese with her statements, limiting her visits to the "only two sites on which the Lebanese have no disagreements."

Selected Headlines

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"Clinton: We Look Forward to Working with the Lebanese Government to Be Formulated After June 7" Arab nationalist As-Safir

"Clinton in Beirut for Hours and She Carried Obama's Support for Suleiman" Independent Ad-Diyar

"Clinton from Beirut Calls for Elections without Intimidation" Pan-Arab Al-Hayat

"Clinton from Beirut: The Elections and Support for the Army" Pro-opposition Al-Akhbar

"Clinton: Lebanon is Not for Sale" French-language, Beirut-based L'Orient - Le Jour

"A Quick Visit by Secretary Clinton to Lebanon: To Confirm the Tribunal, Support Moderation and Loyalty to the State" Pro-Hariri Ash-Sharq

Block Quotes:

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"Clinton in Beirut: Success Because Of Rice!" an editorial by Talal Salman in Arab nationalist As-Safir (4/27):

"It is not really reassuring for the Lebanese to see that their country was the third on Secretary Clinton's secret visits in the region following Iraq and Kuwait. We are afraid that the Obama Administration might have placed Lebanon within the framework of countries that were liberated by the United States...particularly since the March 14 leadership believes that it succeeded in liberating Lebanon by depending on the American open support ...On another note, the Lebanese look with appreciation to President Obama's message of support to President Suleiman. ...The Lebanese also appreciate the fact that Secretary Clinton did not ask the March 14 leaders to meet her somewhere...the way...her predecessor did. ...The Lebanese also noted that Secretary Clinton...kept her statement on general issues and focused on the changes in President Obama's policy towards the region...As for March 14 leaders, probably they did not pay attention to the changes in the U.S. policy...and probably were not happy to see Clinton in ut at this

particular moment..."

"Hillary in Looks and Content," an editorial by Wassef Awada in Arab nationalist As-Safir (4/27):

"It was good that Secretary Clinton limited her visit to the Presidential palace and Hariri's gravesite. Perhaps these two places are the only ones which the Lebanese do not have disagreements about. ...Perhaps it is difficult to understand the American policy towards Lebanon...but it seems that the United States of Obama Clinton is different that the United States of Bush Rice. ...Clinton avoided provoking an important part of the Lebanese. ...This is an achievement by an Administration which is still carrying the inheritance of the former Administration ..."

"Clinton's Visit Showed That New U.S. Thinking Has Yet to Materialize," an unsigned editorial in English-language, Beirut-based The Daily Star (4/27):

"Hillary Clinton's whirlwind visit to Lebanon...generated the expected sound bits. There was also a signal that new foreign policy thinking by the Obama Administration when it comes to this part of the Middle East, has yet to materialize. The US Secretary of State's surprise touchdown didn't contain any surprises. ...Clinton should identify policies - and not principles that would enable Lebanon to play its supposedly fundamental role in a Middle East peace..."

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